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## HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL CRAFTS TEACHING IN PRE-IMPERIAL AND IMPERIAL CHINA (based on a pottery industry)

### *Abstract*

This Article gives consideration to the development of the ceramic art during the pre-imperial and imperial era in China. It is considered through the lens of the craft teaching methods applied in the art of ceramics. The authors of the Article base on the idea that the traditional system of ceramists teaching, which dates back several millennia, was forming along with the formation of the pottery industry itself and this is well-argued on the basis of historical, art and educational research aspects. The authors of the Article are convinced that a short historical tour performed back to the origins of the pottery industry will make it possible to trace a genesis of formation and features of the ceramic art teaching during the pre-imperial and imperial periods of China. Indeed, these are the periods when the fundamentals of the entire art professional education system of China were established, and then this system was spread out for many centuries ahead. As a result of the given research we have a conclusion that during the above mentioned periods in the traditional Chinese culture there was a cult of a teacher and the entire traditional crafts teaching system, including the pottery teaching, among others, was founded on the apprenticeship principles, i.e. «an apprentice under a master craftsman» principle. Starting from the establishment of the first states in China, there a great importance was given to the development of the handicrafts, the imperial workshops were dynamically organized and they became the first breeding grounds for training the future excellent master craftsmen.

*Keywords:* the historical-cultural aspects, the traditional crafts, China, the pottery industry, the product design, the pre-imperial and imperial periods.

**Introduction.** The traditional system of training ceramists, which dates back several millennia, was formed together with the formation of the pottery art itself and is based on historical, art history, scientific and pedagogical aspects reflected in the scientific literature. The issues of the emergence and development of ceramics as a type of handicraft production and cultural phenomenon is one of the main problems in world historiography, since it is the invention of the production of durable and at the same time lightweight ceramic vessels for storing food (including water) that belongs to the most important technological achievements of the prehistoric era, which subsequently led to the progress of many sectors of the economy and culture, in this case Chinese.

To clarify the origins and specifics of the formation of pottery centers in China, a number of historical and art history sources and archival documents were analyzed, where some aspects of education are indirectly highlighted. It should be noted that at the moment we have not identified any works devoted specifically to the training of artisans in China and other countries of Southeast Asia as a whole. In the scientific literature, they are considered only in passing, mainly as complementary material. But at the moment there is no separate study devoted to the history of the development of methods of teaching crafts (or types of crafts).

This fact allows us to assert that the indicated problems were not included in the circle of scientific research in the field of the history

of Chinese pedagogy of art. At the same time, the analysis of the designated sources in the desired perspective will allow us to isolate the main components of the traditional methods of training artisans-ceramists in the pre-Imperial period. The natural richness of clay (as a material) and the special climatic conditions of the whole of East Asia, including China, contributed to the fact that these countries became the oldest homeland of ceramic production on a global scale, which is justified in the works of many scientists [1].

The relevance of the research lies in the need to analyze the accumulated pedagogical experience of universities of the People's Republic of China in the field of teaching methods for the art of ceramics and its further improvement in the conditions of the global world. The analysis of the mentioned aspects will make it possible to understand not only the mechanisms of development and substantive aspects of modern methods of teaching the art of ceramics in art and art pedagogical universities of the People's Republic of China in the conditions of the global world, but also to trace its relationship and difference with the methods of universities of Kazakhstan and other countries of the world, which will allow deeper insight into the internal conceptual trends of modern world art education, its methods and pedagogical technologies.

The scientific significance lies in the grounded ways of solving the issues arising in the process of teaching the art of ceramics, concretize scientific knowledge about the implementation of modern pedagogical concepts of teaching and the deep philosophical perception of art and life as a cultural phenomenon, traditional for the Chinese people, in particular.

The purpose of the study is to reveal the historical and cultural features and the specifics of the content of the teaching methods of ceramics in the centers of ancient Chinese pottery.

**Main body.** In the course of studying ancient ceramics of the PRC, the attention of historical researchers is usually focused on solving two main questions: what specific information about the past is contained in numerous fragments

of clay vessels and how this information can be made available for study. The long-term practice of archaeological research in the oldest pottery centers of the PRC, as well as the study of ancient ceramics, is aimed at clarifying the relative chronology of historical phenomena and, of course, at analyzing historical and cultural ties between different groups of the ancient population. In our case, the analysis of archaeological data allows us to understand how the masters developed or what level they had at one time or another, in order to understand from indirect evidence how and how the training of future potters took place.

The abundance of materials (clay, pigments and mineral additives) became the primary basis for the development of ceramic art in China. According to the study by I.S.Zhushchikhovskaya [2], the largest centers of pottery were localized in the immediate vicinity of deposits of raw materials, water and fuel resources. Almost all modern historians believe that the history of pottery in China begins approximately in VII–VI thousand BC. By that time, basic and primary technological techniques for the manufacture of ceramic products had already been formed, including the selection of raw materials, processing, massing, firing, etc. Early ceramic monuments in different regions demonstrate non-synchronous time intervals. The youngest monuments are on the coasts of Northern China, Korea and Russia. The oldest monuments are located in Southern China, the Japanese Archipelago and the Amur region [3, P.13].

Analyzing the works of Chinese historians of recent years, Liu L., Chen X. [4], the most ancient samples of ceramic products were found in the region south of the Yangtze River – the Yuchanyan cave site. Coarse ceramics with a thickness of up to 2 cm were found here, according to its fragments, a single vessel of the «fu» type, which is distinguished by a pointed bottom, was subsequently reconstructed.

Experts note that [5] the earliest examples of artistic ceramics are painted products of Yangshao. This ceramic was made from washed clay, molded exclusively by hand and polished by craftsmen until completely dried. Its main

decorative difference was the application of the pattern in black, brown and red colors.

Another center of ceramics, namely porcelain, became the Chinese provinces of Jiangxi, Zhejiang and Fujian, which were rich in kaolin (porcelain clays). It should be noted that archaeologists still have to face the main problem when referring to the early ceramics of China, which consists in the absence of the necessary field documentation confirming the connection of the dated samples of coal or bone with the archaeological finds of the ceramics itself [6, P.159].

The culture of the province of Longshan in the II-III centuries AD was marked by the widespread use of the potter's wheel, which contributed to the improvement of pottery. More thin-walled and elegant vessels appear here. According to many experts, this era was the starting point in the development of ceramic art.

The famous Russian researcher of Chinese ceramic art E.A. Girchenko [7, P.148] claims that Longshan ceramics were made on a potter's wheel of rapid rotation. In China, the potter's wheel appeared at the end of the IV – beginning of the III millennium BC, which subsequently spread throughout the region and contributed to the technological breakthrough of Chinese pottery production. But, the Longshan ceramics itself is distinguished by its high originality – the circle was used mainly to refine the elements, and many of its elements were molded manually or on model forms. During this period, compared with the previous Yangshao period, production indicators increased significantly, not only thick-walled dishes, but thin-walled ones began to be manufactured. That indicates the development of a high level of skill of the potters of that time.

The ceramic art of China acquires a more perfect form in the era of the early states – Shang (1700 – 1050 BC) and Zhou (1050 -221 BC). These states, according to some sources, [42; 43] were distinguished by high culture, which contributed to the development of the state achievements of the Near and Far East. This circle included the use of bronze casting technologies, wheat cultivation and the use of

a breakthrough tool in the art of ceramics – the potter's wheel. Artisans of that period learned to masterfully use a potter's wheel, discovered and developed glaze coating technologies and were able to improve the technique of firing ceramic products. Although, while not enough is known about the technological process of firing, it seems that you can kindle more fire in the furnace and everything will work out, but even modern ceramists write that the firing technology is also quite complicated [8, P.240]

According to Chinese historians, [9] in the Shang era, the craft was very developed, and the creators of magnificent works of art were slave artisans who were the forerunners of serfs. At that time they were called «baigong» (in some provinces «zai»), and their overseers «baixin» (in some provinces «zhongzai»).

In general, the art of artisans was highly appreciated in that era, but still during the Chunqiu period only a part of them were able to gain freedom and engage in their own production. At the same time, many slaves had families, and they constantly sought the opportunity to conduct their own small-scale production, which eventually led to the decline of the slave system during the reign of Zhou Xin. The craft of the era of the early states was of a domestic nature. However, liberation from slavery did not mean liberation from taxes. Artisans had to pay considerable funds to the state treasury.

Thus, the Chinese in the pre-imperial period have already become skilled masters of pottery. They produced many products - from heavy and functional vessels for storing food and water, to exquisitely decorated products in the finest porcelain, which differed significantly both in artistic design and production technologies by region. The technology of making ceramic products, their painting, firing, etc. have been developing for a long time and forming a special pictorial language of Chinese ceramic artists and artisans.

**Literary review.** Regarding the ways of transferring crafts, Chinese sources [10] note that each house was engaged in some specific craft, and in pottery centers mainly the art of ceramics. The masters passed on

their knowledge, skills and abilities to their children. Children were accustomed to pottery and any other craft in which the family was professionalized from early childhood. The son helped the father, and the daughter helped the mother. There was a division of labor – men performed hard work (kneading clay, modeling large-sized ceramic products, firing, etc.), and women were engaged in ornamentation and painting ceramic products. At the same time, family workshops that were more established in handicraft production could hire students from their own settlement. Mainly the training of artisans was based on family education, i.e. in the family circle.

These are the general scant information about the process of educating artisans-potters. In general, the pre-Imperial period is very poorly studied in the analyzed context. This was noted by the famous sinologist E.

Balash: «Chinese historical writings barely mention the controlled classes - peasants, artisans, merchants, except when it comes to their relations with the state» [5, P.56].

According to E.P. Stuzhina [11], 329 artisans worked in government silk-weaving workshops in Chengdu, and 3700 artisans worked in state armory workshops. At the same time, in state workshops there were elements of division of labor in the form of masters and apprentices. The latter performed all the rough work, and the masters supervised the process of manufacturing products.

The existence of apprentice boys in stone-cutting workshops is noted by Ch. Williams [12]. At first, the boys started working on primitive machines, taking the first steps in mastering the stone-cutting art, and only after many years they became real stone-cutting masters. The apprentice was required to clearly obey the master and complete obedience.

Important here is not only the guild organization of labor, but also the traditional worldview of the Chinese. After all, unlike other world cultures, morality was considered primary, and religion secondary. At the same time, according to S.A.Gudimova [13], in ancient Chinese society the slightest violation of morality was severely censured by society

and the authorities. This is the main idea of the education of apprentices, which required strict observance of traditions and experience developed over centuries.

It should be noted that the analysis of the works of historians [14], [15] allows us to say that at that time the emperor and his family occupied the highest social status, followed by princes, nobles, government officials and commoners, who were divided into scientists, farmers, artisans and merchants.

At the same time, entering the service in the imperial workshop even as an apprentice required training, where all applicants passed a fairly rigorous selection. Before starting work, they were trained. This training in the first year was aimed at learning the basics of the craft, while producing half of the products of a full-fledged craftsman. After a year of study and a positive exam, the artisan's family received a tax benefit. Of course, by the end of the second year, the student was obliged to perform the same amount of work as an experienced imperial artisan, while receiving a decent monetary reward. According to Han rules, a student was not allowed to be a state craftsman until he had completed two years of training in imperial workshops.

The analysis of a huge number of historical works made it possible to isolate the three most ancient centers of pottery in Asia: the first is southern China (about 14,800 years old); the second is the Japanese Islands (about 12700 years old); and the third is the Russian Far East (about 12400 years old). At the same time, according to Y.V. Kuzmin [16, P.21], each pottery center as a regional component has specific distinctive features, which proves the fact of the independence of the development of pottery technologies. As Tsetlin Yu B. writes, ceramics at different stages of its history represented a complex open system of development. On the one hand, the constant exchange of information between its components, and on the other - with the natural environment and the society in which it lives, ensures its functioning [17, P.353].

**Methods.** In general, in pre-imperial China, the idea of training masters according to a «ready-made model» prevails, i.e. blind copying

of traditional forms with strict observance of strict rules, which in world pedagogy is called the «teacher-student» system, where the teacher is often the father, and the son or closest relatives are the student. In Chinese characters, this expression looks like this: 老師 - 學生.

To analyze the formation of the academic system of education in Imperial China, we relied on the works of famous scientists such as Lombard Denis [18], A.Burykin [19], Chen Chuanxi [20], Mark Cartwright [21] and many others. These scientists in their works reflected certain aspects of the development of pottery in China, but unfortunately, no scientific work has been created that fully covers the problems of the formation and development of the academic system of art education in China. Many materials from these sources are indirect.

At the end of the imperial period, that is, during the Qin Dynasty. Researcher W. Guan'yuy writes about this: We can state that the fascinating and insightful history of the political, social and cultural life of the Qing Dynasty demonstrates the complex interaction between the inner Asian traditions of the Manchus, who conquered China in 1644, and the indigenous Chinese cultural traditions [22, P.76]. But, at the same time, it is art historians who note that everything basic that characterizes Chinese imperial life and the historical time of the Chinese was theoretically developed in the Han era and was perceived as an adequate chronology of history in general, and the history of art in particular.

Thus, art historians call the Han epoch a landmark epoch for China, where, analyzing the epochs, they note: the culture of Han and Qin was distinguished by rudeness and grandeur, «Wei and Jin clarity and looseness, Tang and Sunn - wealth and beauty» [23, P.234]. The development of foreign trade relations, the expansion of the empire's territory – all this speaks of the power of China of the Tang era [24, P.72]. And the craft of clay firing itself - pottery originated in China a long time ago [25, P.95].

**Results.** Ceramic art is an important component of social life, directly participating in and accompanying various historical stages

of prosperity or decline of Chinese society [26, P.310]. The products produced by artisans were made of such materials as jade, ivory, bronze, silk, ceramics, which served as an important component both in rituals and in everyday life. That stimulated the training of young masters. So, researchers [20; 21] note that before the Ming Dynasty in the workshops of the emperor, the quality of ceramics was at a high level and dominated the overall production, but not large resources made it impossible to produce everything in large quantities. However, by the middle of the Ming Dynasty, private workshops continued to produce large quantities of ceramics and became popular among the population and gradually surpassed the imperial workshops.

In general, the arts, as expressed by the well-known sinologist M.A. Neglinskaya, «using the patronage of the emperors, ... the enamels of the Manchurian period, as well as the official art of this period as a whole, were associated with a state ritual that determined the hierarchy of social values» [27, P.73]. Consequently, the court workshops created things for the personal use of the emperor and other high-ranking persons, which prioritized the special quality of the products produced.

**Discussion.** In the Chinese archives there is information about the craftsmanship and the process of making products, including porcelain and enamel, which indirectly clarify the situation with the process of training masters. For example, the official Liu Tingji (劉廷幾) wrote in «Notes from the Zaiyuan Garden»: many things for the imperial court were made under the guidance of a master named Liu Panyuan. It follows from the palace chronicles that this official handed over hundreds of sketches for painting porcelain to Jingdezhen. It is very likely that his sketches were also used by court enamellers [28, P.8]. From other chronicles studied by the Chinese researcher Chang Linsheng [28], it is known that the activities of each imperial workshop were monitored by a special government official, and the products were made by apprentices (students) under the guidance of a master (teacher). Great attention was paid to ceramics and porcelain painting, as they were elevated to the rank of state gifts.

Hence, it can be concluded that great attention was paid to the training and conditions of masters in Imperial China.

At the same time, the most famous masters were awarded both honorary titles and cash prizes. The Chinese researcher of the archival chronicles of the imperial period Chang Linsheng notes about this: after the report of the manager, the emperor ordered to give each of the two performers of the painting twenty lan of silver, the masters involved in the technological process – ten lan, the apprentices and the artisan who performed the gilding – five lan [28, P.11]. Consequently, a job well done did not go unnoticed by the emperor and was rewarded in every possible way.

Interesting information is given by M.A. Neglinskaya [27, P.286], who, studying Chinese archives, found records from 1726, where it is indicated that a certain master of painted enamel named Zhang Qi took six months off, and his expenses for this period were paid by the governor of Guangdong. Another master of painted enamel named Kuang Linan also took six months off to arrange a wedding, and his expenses were taken over by the military ruler of Guangxi and Guangdong. And, such several examples are given by this researcher, which suggests that the training, content and other components of the masters' life were at a high level.

The process of handicraft production itself, in imperial (state) workshops, in order to save time and resources, was carried out in the form of a conveyor shop. That is, the items were made on a kind of assembly line, where the master focused his attention on one kind of creative process.

Accordingly, there was also quality control, where some craftsmen were required to mark their names and other data on already manufactured products. Improper execution led to fines, and the best were rewarded. Thus, in the state workshops, the names of the master manufacturers were marked on the manufactured products.

Much information about the specifics of the training of masters in imperial China is presented in the book by Anthony J.Barbieri-Low [29]

«Artisans in early Imperial China», where the author, on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach, studying archival materials and information from the socio-economic context, identifies information about the life of artisans, about the division of labor in production, the history of art to analyze the creations of artisans. An important point in his book is the role of convict workers in the production of handicrafts in the imperial workshops.

Touching upon the issue of the educational system of the Ming dynasty, it must be said that public schools, higher schools, as well as private educational institutions were opened in the capitals, all under the control of the city administration. The development of knowledge was reflected in the practice of an encyclopedic nature. Thus, art education in imperial China, with the influence of various periods of various political and social upheavals, contributed to the formation of a system of imperial and private schools centered on one teacher – master, which influenced craft workshops and the master–apprentice/apprentice system.

This model of education did not change until the XIX century, when the imperial system was put to the test, political and social life entered the modern era. During the Qing Dynasty, the first evidence of crafts was collected. The written sources describe in detail the main categories, such as: potter, locksmith, dye, tanner, polisher, as well as materials and procedures for the development of more than three dozen crafts with relevant disciplines.

The training of artisans in China in imperial and private workshops, as well as in universities, up to the XIX century, took place between master and pupil, and the art of ceramics itself expanded with each epoch in accordance with changes in political, religious and aesthetic ideals. Along with the craft and the development of technology, of course, great skill was required from the potters.

In general, we can say that the achievements of China and Chinese potters have been passed down from generation to generation in the strictest secrecy. The famous Russian sinologist I.S.Zhushchikhovskaya writes about this: from the point of view of the structure and

forms of the production process, pottery is a fairly conservative industry. Once found and tested technological recipes, technical means and techniques, if they provided the necessary quality of finished products, have not changed for centuries and even millennia [30, P.168].

Ceramics has been an attribute of the funeral cult since ancient times, and also actively participated in other spheres of the ritual life of traditional Chinese society. The spiritual life of ancient China was able to develop a number of basic aesthetic principles that Chinese art still follows. At this time, classical examples of ceramic art appeared, which became the basis of genre styles, and the originally formed system of visual symbols developed and became more complicated over time. For example, the mature ornaments of painted ceramics, differing in small lines, elegant drawings, precise design, variety of techniques and complexity of configurations, still had a close connection with real life [31, P.173]. In our study, we want to say that nowadays new connections with the artistic heritage are being determined in the Celestial Empire and most ceramics masters express no small interest in the art of folk crafts, under their influence forming a special specificity of expression with their own distinctive capabilities [32, P.58].

The real turning point in the history of art education is the late Middle Ages with a close acquaintance with Western culture. The progressive people of China understood that overcoming the significant lag of the patriarchal-feudal country against the background of developed European countries is possible primarily at the expense of educated people, therefore, educational institutions of various levels and profiles began to open everywhere in the country. The famous statesman of the late Middle Ages, Kang Yu-wei, believed that it was educated people («wise people») who were «more powerful, and academies of arts and sciences should be established in all provinces, districts and counties» [33, P.17].

**Conclusion.** Summing up, the overall result of the study in a given perspective, it should be noted that the methodology of teaching the art of ceramics in art universities of the

People's Republic of China has a long history, but its scientific justification and teaching methodology still remains a little-developed aspect in the general pedagogy of art. Its insufficient elaboration is explained by a number of reasons: the political and social plan, the crisis of previous eras, the ideological struggle in the field of education (meaning the change of educational paradigms) and some controversial moments in the field of the general concept of art education.

It should be noted that today in China, the modern system of handicrafts is an integration of traditional handicrafts and the modern education system. It not only has the characteristics of teaching in small classes and project-based training of traditional handicrafts, but also includes the main elements of modern vocational education and training for modern enterprises [34, P.316].

The idea of educating a person in any perspective (a specialist doctor, or a master craftsman) was inextricably linked with philosophy, i.e. with the prevailing philosophical trends in China. Among them, the main ones were: Confucianism (zhu-jia), Moism (mo-jia), Taoism, Legism. At the same time, it was the doctrine and practice of Confucians that turned out to be the most influential, and optimally integrated into the state management system, which played a significant role in the history of Chinese education, in its substantive aspects.

Thus, art education in imperial China, with the influence of various political and social upheavals, contributed to the formation of a system of private schools in the field of teaching the art of ceramics. At its center was a master teacher, which influenced craft workshops and the formation of the master-apprentice/apprentice system. The training of artisans in China in imperial and private workshops until the beginning of the twentieth century took place between a master and a student, and the art of ceramics was enriched and expanded with each new era in accordance with the religious and aesthetic ideals of Chinese society, reaching its perfection to a recognizable brand all over the world.

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### **Империяға дейінгі және империялық Қытайда дәстүрлі колөнерді оқытудың тарихи-мәдени аспектілері (қыш өндірісі мысалында)**

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*Аңдатпа*

Бұл мақалада Қытайдың империяға дейінгі және империялық кезеңдеріндегі қыш өнерінің қалыптасуы мен даму ерекшеліктері қыш өнерінің мысалын қолдана отырып, колөнерді оқыту әдісінің призмасы арқылы қарастырылады. Мақала авторлары бірнеше мыңжылдықтардан бастау алған қышшыларды

оқытудың дәстүрлі жүйесі қыш өндірісінің пайда болуымен бірге қалыптасты және тарихи, өнертану және ғылыми-педагогикалық аспектілерге негізделген деген көзқараста.

Авторлар қыш өндірісінің қалыптасуының бастауына қысқаша тарихи экскурс жасаудың Қытайдың империяға дейінгі және империялық кезеңдеріндегі қыш өнерін оқытудың пайда болу генезисі мен ерекшеліктерін анықтауға мүмкіндік беретініне сенімді. Шынында да, дәл осы кезеңдерде Қытайда көптеген ғасырлар бойына созылған кәсіби көркемдік білім беру жүйесінің барлық негіздері қаланды.

Осы зерттеудің нәтижесі -- бұл кезеңдерде дәстүрлі қытай мәдениетінде мұғалімге табыну және дәстүрлі қолөнерді, оның ішінде қыш өнерін оқытудың бүкіл жүйесі «шебер-шәкірт» қағидаты бойынша құрылды және Қытайдың алғашқы мемлекеттерінің қалыптасу кезеңімен бірге дамып, қолөнерге үлкен мән берілді, императорлық шеберханалар белсенді түрде құрылды, бұл тамаша қолөнер шеберлерін дайындаудың алғашқы ұсталары болды.

*Түйін сөздер:* тарихи-мәдени аспектілер, дәстүрлі қолөнер, Қытай, қыш өндірісі, бұйымдар дизайны, империяға дейінгі және империялық кезеңдер.

### **Историко-культурные аспекты обучения искусству керамики в доимперском и имперском Китае (на примере гончарного производства)**

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#### *Аннотация*

В настоящей статье рассматриваются особенности становления и развития керамического искусства в доимперскую и имперскую эпоху Китая через призму методики обучения ремеслу, на примере искусства керамики. Здесь авторы статьи исходили от мысли о том, что традиционная система обучения керамистов, которая насчитывает несколько тысячелетий формировалась вместе со становлением самого гончарного производства и аргументировано опирается исторические, искусствоведческие и научно-педагогические аспекты.

Авторы убеждены, что краткий исторический экскурс к истокам становления гончарного производства позволит проследить генезис становления и особенностей обучения искусству керамики в доимперский и имперский период Китая. Ведь, именно в эти периоды закладываются основы становления всей системы профессионального художественного образования Китая, которая растянулась на многие столетия вперед.

Результатом данного исследования является вывод о том, что в эти периоды в традиционной китайской культуре существовал культ учителя и вся система обучения традиционным ремеслам и, гончарному делу в том числе, строилась по принципу «мастер-подмастерье», а со временем становления первых государств Китая развитию ремесел придавалось огромное значение, активно создавались императорские мастерские, которые стали первыми кузницами подготовки прекрасных мастеров.

*Ключевые слова:* историко-культурные аспекты; традиционные ремесла; Китай; гончарное производство; дизайн изделий; доимперский и имперский периоды.

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